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New Hampshire Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program provides cost-share payments to agricultural producers who voluntarily address issues such as water quality, water management, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

Charles and Diane Souther have owned and operated a 165 acre orchard and small fruit farm in Concord, NH since 1978. Harvest begins in the summer at Apple Hill Farm when strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, peaches and other small fruits are sold, either to visitors who “pick your own” or in a modern, consumer friendly farmstand complete with an in-store bakery. During the fall when crisp autumn air brings about the ripening of 40 varieties of apples, fresh pressed apple cider and mountain views entice customers to the farm.

In addition to their orchard and small fruit production, they also produce high value vegetables such as pumpkins and sweet corn. When time permits, approximately 80 acres of woodland is managed for cordwood and sawlogs.



Good land stewardship has always been important to the Southers as demonstrated by their willingness to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Merrimack County Conservation District (MCCD) to implement conservation measures on their farm. Some examples of conservation practices utilized on the farm include contour farming, crop rotations, and integrated pest management.

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The Southers recently completed a project in a newly planted two acre blueberry and raspberry patch, where a micro irrigation system was put in place using cost share under the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program. By reducing the amount of water necessary to irrigate the small fruit planting, the limited water available from the farm pond is available for



other purposes, such as orchard spraying. The micro irrigation system was also designed to deliver nutrients to the plants in precision form, usually referred to as fertigation. By placing the proper amounts of water and nutrients directly in the plants root zone there is essentially no waste or nutrient runoff. This helps maintain water quality within the Merrimack River Watershed.

The AMA program also helped with the construction of a heavy use area adjacent to the recently constructed apple storage building. The heavy use area prevents soil erosion and sediment movement associated with tractor loading and unloading operations.

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